been set up in Planning Commission to measure physical outcomes of major programmes/schemes.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir.

(e) These proposals will help in monitoring and assessing the implementation and impact of the major programmes/schemes.

Merger of weak banks with stronger banks

2158. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in the first phase of the consolidation in the Indian Banking sector, he is considering the merger of weak banks with stronger banks to strengthen financial position of banks;

(b) if so, the details of weak banks which have been considered;

(c) what are major plans proposed by Government in this regard; and

(d) to what extent it will be helpful in improving banks functioning and profitability?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) Any proposal for consolidation by way of merger etc. of one nationalised bank with another nationalised bank has to come from the management of the banks concerned, with Govt. playing a supportive role as the common shareholder. The Boards of Banks have to take a decision in this regard based on the synergy levels of merging/consolidating entities. In his meeting with CEOs of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) held on 18th November 2005, the Finance Minister emphasized that to accelerate the process of consolidation in the banking sector, it is necessary that all the stakeholders are sensitised. The banks have been requested to continue and deepen the dialogue with the employees and officers to obtain a consensus in favour of consolidation.

(d) Small and weak banks pose systemic risks with their low capital adequacy ratio and high NPAs. Consolidation would allow economies of scale in terms of footprint, manpower and other resources. Having Indian Banks of a larger size would also enable them to face competition arising

from internationalization of the economy. Larger size also entails better management of risk.

Pending excise duty cases

2159. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI HARISH RAWAT:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that about 55,000 cases involving excise duty of Rs. 23,276 crore were pending as on 31st March, 2004 with different authorities;

(b) whether it is also a fact that about 8369 cases are pending for more than five years;

(c) if so, measures taken to expedite adjudication of these cases; and

(d) whether there is any proposal to fix time-limit for adjudication of cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) As per C&AG's report No. 11 of 2005 (Indirect Taxes—Central Excise and Service Tax), a total of 54,560 cases, involving excise duty of Rs. 23,275.77 crore were pending finalization as on 31st March, 2004 with different authorities, which included departmental officers, Commissioner (Appeals), Tribunal, High Courts and Supreme Court. Out of these, 8369 cases were pending for more than five years.

(c) Disposal of cases pending before various authorities is a continuous process. While old cases are disposed off, new cases crop up. The following steps have been taken by the Government to speed up the disposal of cases:—

(i) Continuous monitoring of cases pending before different authorities.

(ii) Filing of applications before different appellate authorities for disposal/early hearing of cases.

(iii) Legislative provision has been made to ensure early disposal